

Story Ideas for New England Outdoor Writers

February 2005

Power from the Wind

Environmentally friendly wind power technology is attractive as a renewable energy resource. However, wind power projects can be a hazard to wildlife, especially birds and bats. For example, migrating songbirds, eagles and hawks travel along Appalachian Mountain ridge lines where thermal updrafts provide lift. In inclement weather, when birds fly lower than usual, they can collide with human made structures. Bats are also killed or injured when they collide with wind towers and blades. Wind power project construction also may destroy important wildlife habitat or affect wildlife during breeding, feeding or migration. As an increasing number of wind projects are being developed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is consulting with developers and suggesting adaptations to help avoid or minimize harm to wildlife in environmentally sensitive areas. Contact Diana Weaver, 413/253 8329.

50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey. The survey determines the status of North American waterfowl populations and is a major factor in setting annual waterfowl hunting regulations. This survey, conducted by the Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, is one of the largest and most reliable wildlife surveys in the world. Pilot-biologists fly more than 80,000 miles at treetop level to track the population levels of waterfowl and other bird species. Ground crews made up of observers and others from federal and state wildlife agencies add to the data collection efforts. The Service will be coordinating opportunities for reporters to interview the pilot-biologists. Some unique opportunities for a select number of journalists to join the pilot-biologists in a plane to see how they perform their survey work will be made available. Contact: Terri Edwards, 413/253 8324.

Illegal wildlife

Designated ports of entry - in the Northeast, Boston, Newark/New York and Baltimore - receive illegally imported wildlife and wildlife products every day. The Service's team of wildlife inspectors checks shipments and confiscates illegal shipments that can contain caviar, clothing and critters. Service staff estimate that the monetary value of illegally imported wildlife and wildlife products nationwide is second only to the monetary value of the illegal drug trade. See video and still photos of confiscated bush meat at: <http://northeast.fws.gov/bushmeat.html> Contact Diana Weaver, 413/253 8329.

A half million acres, a half million reasons

The life Service in 2005 will acquire the 500,000th acre for national wildlife refuges in its Northeast Region, which encompasses 13 states from Maine south to Virginia. A half million acres set aside since the early 1930s for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other native wildlife is a significant milestone in this densely populated region. From military base transfers to the sale of easements by conservation-minded landowners, there are innovative partnerships among government, commerce, industry, organizations and individuals that have made possible the protection of each acre. Contact: Terri Edwards, 413/253 8324.

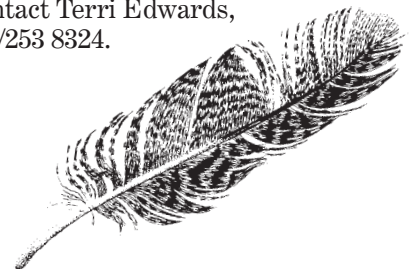
Fish passage!

Providing fish passage and removing dams on rivers and streams are important keys to recovering species at risk such as endangered Atlantic salmon in Maine. Several dams in the Northeast will be removed soon - including Veazie Dam and Great Works Dam, both on Maine's Penobscot River. This will allow migratory fish to wind their way upstream to the Penobscot Indian Reservation. In six states from Maine to Maryland, Service grants and matching funds from partners will provide for fish

passage or dam removal. In Maine, fish passage at the Coopers Mill Dam on the Sheepscot River will improve access to 25 miles of habitat; in New Hampshire, the Service will work with partners on projects in the Ashuelot River watershed; in New York, the Peconic River Alewife Restoration Program on Long Island will reconnect fish access throughout the 22 mile long Peconic River; in Pennsylvania, a channel will go around the historic Heishman's Mill Dam on Conodoguinet Creek in Cumberland County for fish passage, opening more than 25 miles of fish spawning habitat. Contact Diana Weaver, 413/253 8329.

Native American grants

Four New England tribes received \$629,000 in Service conservation grants during 2004, the second year of the national Tribal Wildlife Grant Program and the Tribal Landowner Incentive Program (28 grants totaling \$6 million were awarded nationally): The Passamaquoddys (Maine) received nearly \$106,000 to repair a fish ladder and install an eel passageway that will help restore native sea run fish and American eel; the Micmacs (Maine) received \$250,000 to acquire habitat for rare and endangered species like Canada lynx, bald eagle and Atlantic salmon; the Wampanoags (Mass.) received \$247,500 to help restore bay scallops in Martha's Vineyard in partnership with towns, a federal marine laboratory and a private shellfish group; St. Regis Mohawks (N.Y.) received \$25,500 to purchase a conservation easement for protecting wetland habitat, at risk species and those species that are significant to the tribe. See <http://northeast.fws.gov/nativeamerican/index.html> Contact Terri Edwards, 413/253 8324.



The invaders are coming . . .

Water chestnuts, zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, phragmites and more: Known as invasive or exotic plants, they have had serious and costly impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat. Invasives are costing us \$138 billion a year. Zebra mussels have spread through the waterways of the eastern United States, clogging industrial and municipal water intakes. In New England about 100 species are considered invasive. Water chestnut chokes lakes and rivers; Oriental bittersweet winds itself around trees and shrubs, choking the life out of them and shading growth of other plants; Japanese knotweed displaces other plants and dominates river banks; while glossy buckthorn and garlic mustard prevent native species from regenerating in forests. Contact Diana Weaver, 413/253 8329.

Green mission, green buildings

In keeping with its conservation mission, the Service is making new facilities for national wildlife refuges in the Northeast as "green" as possible. New visitor and administrative centers at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia, and Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts, for example, boast environmentally sustainable designs, technologies and products. Wind power is also on the horizon. A technical assistance grant obtained by the Service's Northeast Region from the Department of Energy's Federal Energy Management Program has been used to conduct a wind resources analysis for 50 refuge units, and 30 sites were found to be potentially suitable for small (10 kW, 80-foot tall) wind turbines. Contact Terri Edwards, 413/253 8324.

Declining Eels??

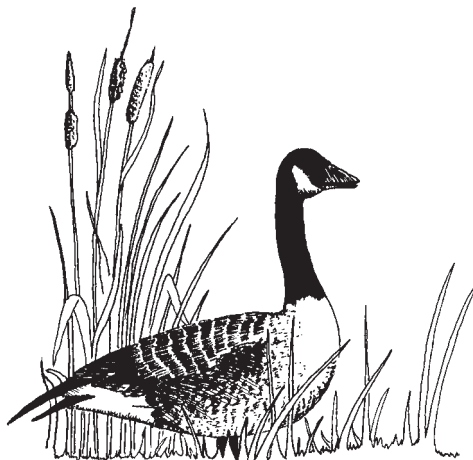
The Service will evaluate whether to consider Endangered Species Act protection for the American eel, the only freshwater eel in the Western Hemisphere. The Service will decide by March whether a petition provides substantial information indicating that eels may need ESA protection. The Service already agreed to review the American eel status at the request of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (representing 15 states from Maine to Florida) and Great Lakes Fishery Commission in light of an apparent decline in the commercial eel harvest. The Service must decide whether to proceed with a proposed rule to provide ESA protection by November 2005. American eels live from Greenland

south along the North American coast to Brazil and, in the United States, inland to the Great Lakes. Eels begin their lives in the mid-Atlantic Sargasso Sea. About a year later, they migrate to freshwater rivers and lakes and coastal areas where they live for seven to 30 years. At maturity, eels return to the Sargasso Sea to spawn and die. Contact Marci Caplis, 413/253 8321.

Now that's what I call a strategy!

In order to receive federal funds through the State Wildlife Grants program, Congress has charged each state and territory with developing a state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. These strategies will, for the first time in our nation's conservation history, articulate what must be done to keep common species common. They will provide the vehicle for focusing funding from a variety of sources to priority conservation actions, such as land acquisition, access for wildlife recreationists and species restoration. Their scope will go beyond the responsibilities of state fish and wildlife agencies and identify conservation actions that federal agencies and other conservation partners can help accomplish. The collective vision of these strategies will represent a milestone in conservation every bit as significant as great achievements such as the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Contact: Terri Edwards, 413/253 8324.

These story ideas may also be seen at <http://northeast.fws.gov/newsroom/storyideas.html>



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